

AMERICAN UNION COMMISSION,

Maryland Branch Office, 89 and 91 W. Baltimore St.

Baltimore, November 1865.

DEAR SIR:—Permit us most respectfully to invite your attention to the consideration of the plans and purposes of the American Union Commission. It “is constituted for the purpose of aiding and co-operating with the people of those portions of the United States which have been desolated and impoverished by the war, in the restoration of their civil and social condition, upon the basis of industry, education, freedom and christian morality.” A Maryland Branch has been organized in Baltimore city, composed of some thirty prominent citizens.

It proposes to relieve the immediate wants of the suffering, by the distribution of food, clothing and medicine; to restore and encourage domestic industry, by assisting the people to obtain seed and implements of agriculture; to assist in the organization of schools for the masses; to encourage a healthful emigration; to aid in the establishment of an enlightened and well regulated press; and by every practicable means, cultivate a patriotic devotion to the unity of our common country, and to promote the prosperity and perpetuity of her institutions.

The basis of this Commission is broad, its plans comprehensive and its work tangible, and from our personal observation, we can assure you, it is most urgent. The condition of things is well calculated to call forth our deepest commiseration. It demands a liberality commensurate with our ability. We are also in the daily receipt of letters from ministers of various denominations, and others in the South, which excite the most fearful apprehensions of distress during the coming winter, unless timely efforts are made to avert such a calamity.

It is a national organization. It has the approval of the government. Like the Christian and Sanitary Commissions, it has been called into being by the emergencies of war. It is a national charity. What is done by this Commission in behalf of refugees and others who have been rendered destitute by the war, is gratuitous—these persons being unable either to buy or insure payment for what they receive. It acts the part of the good Samaritan. It remembers those that suffer adversity, and proposes to visit with practical sympathy, the widow and fatherless in their affliction.

Society is in a state of chaos. Now is the time to restore social harmony. To build upon a foundation in harmony with the present aspect of things, that will secure prosperity and social happiness to the people, and command the respect of the civilized world. Schools have been broken up, and must be reorganized and adapted to the wants of the children, who are growing up in vice and ignorance. And a wide-spread destruction and destitution prevails over large sections of the country, where starvation, like an armed man, will overtake the people, unless the North, East and West come to the rescue, and by timely assistance prevent it. If neglected, the result would be very sad to them, and damaging to our reputation for humanity. But we are persuaded that you will not lay down this communication before you resolve, personally, to do what you can to aid this philanthropic and Christian work. The present demands upon us are greater than our means to supply. The demands multiply as we approach the winter.

We submit a few facts that are daily coming to hand, as specimens, showing the great importance of this agency. The Rev. J. L. Irwin, agent of the Commission, writing from Buckanon, Upshur Co., West Virginia, to Rev. F. Israel, Corresponding Secretary, under date of Oct. 25, says: “My object in writing you now, is to give you a statement in reference to the condition of one neighborhood, some twenty miles from this point. I found eighteen widows with an aggregate of fifty-two children, and eight children whose parents are both dead. All of these are widows and children of men who died as citizens in the various prisons of the South. All are dependent, and most of them very poor, and without help, must suffer. They may be able to obtain corn bread, but meat and clothing will be out of the question. Think of a poor woman out in this back settlement, with from two to eight children, destitute, and winter coming on.”

The Richmond *Republic*, a loyal and trustworthy paper, says: “The poverty and sufferings of the people in Virginia, great enough already to melt the sternest nature, bid fair to assume proportions of horror in the approaching winter which it curdles the blood to contemplate. * * * Money is scarce; the means of subsistence is high; the wheat crop throughout the South is comparatively a failure, and though the corn crop is unusually fine for the area cultivated, yet the area, owing to the obstructions to planting from various causes, is exceedingly limited. It makes the heart bleed to think of the sufferings which, if some efficient measures are not adopted for relief, may be the terrible lot of thousands of our people when the rigors of winter shall aggravate the horrors of the present destitution.”

A letter from Rev. C. A. Raymond, Judge of the United States Military Court of the District of the Peninsula of Virginia, to G. S. Griffith, Esq., President of Maryland Union Commission, says: "Perhaps, in no part of the South, has there been more general deprivations, and consequently there are now but few portions of the whole country whose future is more gloomy than the counties above us. This is not because this has been a succession of battle-fields merely, but from the fact that, at the beginning of the war, under the influence of simple panic, nearly the whole peninsula was abandoned. Old men, widows and young—all fled from the imaginary cruelty of their enemies. After an absence of four years, years of unparalleled want and suffering, the survivors have returned to find their houses occupied by others, their stock consumed, their personal effects and implements of husbandry destroyed. * * * Many are widows, many orphans, and the winter, with its severities in prospect, threatens accumulated misery. They need everything, especially bedding, clothing, wheat for seed, and implements."

The dwellings of thousands of helpless widows and orphans from West Virginia, East Tennessee, and of other Southern States, whose loyal husbands and fathers fell in battle for their country, and whose blood mingles with the blood of their comrades on every battle-field, have been burned, and they are now homeless and penniless in the land of their fathers. They ask protection from the pelting storms of winter, and the means of subsistence, at the hands of their countrymen. Must these widows pine in hopeless want and misery, and no generous hand stretch forth to relieve their necessities? Must they beg for clothing to cover their nakedness, and no one respond to their request? must their innocent and helpless orphans cry for bread, and no one heed the cry? May Heaven pity the widow and fatherless, who are in a state of utter destitution, weeping by the graves of their heroic dead, with no local aid societies in the community where they reside to relieve their wants, and haggard poverty and torturing famine on their track.

It now comes to you personally, soliciting your prayers and earnest co-operation in this philanthropic and Christian work. Will you not contribute something to assuage the widow's grief and dry the orphan's tear? Do you ask, what can I do? Show this communication to your neighbors. See that it is read in your congregation. Organize an auxiliary commission of some of the leading citizens of your town, or if you cannot do that, you may interest the women of your place to organize one among themselves. You can show your sympathy for a suffering people. You can demonstrate your obedience to Christ, who commands us to love our neighbor as ourselves. You can become a "repairer of the breach" and "a restorer of paths to dwell in." You can show that you are not actuated by personal prejudices, or a sectional animosity, but rather by a magnanimous charity. You can implore the blessing of God upon the effort to bring order out of chaos, and relief to our suffering humanity. Can you not raise private and public contributions of money and clothing, and forward to the Commission? Will you not aid us in this merciful work? Let us exhibit a magnanimity as great to relieve, as we have power to conquer a gigantic rebellion. Let us bind together the whole country in the bonds of a national sympathy and brotherhood.

We call upon the patriot, by his desire of a united country; the philanthropist, by his desire to alleviate human suffering; the Christian, by his faith in God's Word and his love for the souls and bodies of men; and all by the memory of the heroic dead, and as a testimony of gratitude to God for giving us peace and union, to come to the rescue. The effort we are putting forth, if it meets a generous response, will not only relieve great suffering, but contribute much to rebind the whole country together in the fraternal bonds of a common national brotherhood. Let the merchant contribute goods; the manufacturer, implements; the farmer, grain; the publisher, books; and all what they can, and the blessing of those ready to perish will rest upon the benefactors. "He that hath pity upon the poor, lendeth unto the Lord, and that which he hath given will He pay him again" While "whoso stoppeth his ears at the cry of the poor, he also shall cry himself, but shall not be heard."

Send provisions, grain, farming implements, books, bedding, clothing, new and old, to G. S. Griffith, Esq., No. 91 West Baltimore street; money to J. N. Brown, corner of Calvert and Baltimore streets, where they will be thankfully received, duly acknowledged, and judiciously distributed. And when the work is done, we will rejoice over a country redeemed, united and prosperous.

OFFICERS:

G. S. GRIFFITH, *President*.
 REV. C. DICKSON, D. D., *Vice-President*.
 J. C. BRIDGES, *2nd " "*
 HON. J. M. FRAZIER, *3rd " "*
 J. N. BROWN, *Treasurer*,
 Corner Calvert and Baltimore Sts.
 REV. F. ISRAEL, *Corresponding Secretary*.
 REV. E. R. ESCHBACH, *Rec. Secretary*
 REV. O. M. McDOWELL, *Financial Agent*.

Executive Committee:

G. S. GRIFFITH, *Chairman*.
 WM. BRIDGES, J. HENRY GIESE,
 JESSE TYSON, J. N. BROWN,
 WM. B. CANFIELD, J. C. BRIDGES,
 JOHN L. REED, DR. J. C. THOMAS,